

Letters to the Editor

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Island Outrage

I note the remark you quote from grandson Kermit Roosevelt: "It's a darn shame." The great T.R. himself would be more emphatic: he'd call it "an outrage."

I refer to the prospective desecration of Theodore Roosevelt Island by a huge thing variously named "celestial sphere," "glorified gyro-scope" and allied applicable appellations. The same complete with automobile approach and a 200-car parking lot. Cost estimated at nearly a million dollars. Not first hand, but at least second hand, I feel closely acquainted with the sentiments of Theodore Roosevelt. Not as President but as naturalist and conservationist. His closest partner in this field, as everyone knows, was Gifford Pinchot, the first American forester.

As a worker of vintage 1905 in the U.S. Forest Service, I knew Pinchot well. I knew about those wild scrambles (now famous) of G. P. and T. R. in the then wilds of Rock Creek Park. Nothing did T. R. crave more than unspoiled naturalness; nothing did he hate more than what his friend Owen Wister called the "celluloid" counterfeits thereof.

And now it is proposed to install just this on Theodore Roosevelt Island. To the tune of a million dollars and 200 gasping tail fins.

By what aberrant fate, inspired by all the ingenuity of hell, be it that the mite of ground still left, hallowed by men of undisputed greatness, should come under the boot and bulldozer of pigmy-minded minions of a would-be "progress" in complete reverse of the aims of the men supposed to be revered?

Two recent flagrant cases may be cited, one an Island and one a Pond. Thoreau's Walden, badly scourged by a Massachusetts authority, has been lately saved from further devastation by a court order. Theodore Roosevelt Island, in the hands of Federal authority, is yet attainable for the thing that T. R. treasured. But the bill to forsake it has passed the House of Representatives and is now before the Senate.

Let us hope this august body, pressed by affairs of national stature, will not help to deplete this stature by passing the present T. R. Island bill. But if this happens may Mr. Eisenhower honor one of his choice heroes with a resounding veto.

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